

Ask the U.S. Embassy

February 6, 2013

Q. I understand that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) field office will be closing on March 1st, 2013 and USCIS services will now be based out of Santo Domingo. I'm a U.S. citizen residing in the United States and I recently filed for my mother to immigrate to the U.S. Will my mother's immigrant visa interview still take place in Jamaica or does she now have to travel to Santo Domingo?

Your mother's immigrant visa interview will still take place in Kingston. All visa services – both immigrant and nonimmigrant—are run by the Consular Section, which is part of the Department of State. USCIS does not, and has never, handled visa applications. The closure of the USCIS office in Kingston will not affect immigrant visa, nonimmigrant visa, or U.S. passport appointments at the Embassy.

For clarification, the U.S. immigration process is overseen by two U.S. government agencies: USCIS and the Department of State. When a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident files for an eligible family member in Jamaica, the initial petition is approved by USCIS. The vast majority of petitions are approved by USCIS offices in the United States; only a small minority were filed and approved by the USCIS office in Kingston.

Once the petition is approved, it is forwarded by USCIS to the Department of State. For petitions approved by USCIS in the United States, the petition is sent to the National Visa Center, which will schedule the immigrant visa appointment and inform both the applicant and the Consular Section at the Embassy. Petitions that were approved by the USCIS office in Kingston were forwarded directly to the Consular Section, which then scheduled the visa appointment. During the visa interview, consular officers verify the claimed relationship between the petitioner and beneficiary and ensure the applicant has no visa ineligibilities.

The closure of the USCIS office will affect those petitioners who reside in Jamaica and wish to file immigrant petitions with the USCIS office in Kingston. Those petitioners must now mail their petitions to a USCIS lockbox in Chicago. However, no immigrant visa, nonimmigrant visa or U.S. passport appointments at the Embassy will be affected by the closure.

For other USCIS services that were offered through the Kingston office, such as the abandonment of Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status, refugee petitions and transportation letters for LPRs traveling outside of the U.S., please review the USCIS website – www.USCIS.gov – for the new procedures.